

# Sustainability Practices in Urban Cemetery Management

Oyediran Olufemi Oyeleke<sup>1</sup>, Grace Oloukoi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lead City University, Ibadan

1 Oba Otudeko Road Toll Gate Area, Ibadan, 200255, Oyo, Nigeria

DOI: 10.22178/pos.103-5

JEL Classification: R1

Received 21.03.2024

Accepted 25.04.2024

Published online 30.04.2024

Corresponding Author:

Oyediran Olufemi Oyeleke

oooyediran@yahoo.com

© 2024 The Authors. This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](#) 

**Abstract.** Death is a natural event that can have negative consequences for humans, psychological in nature, as well as environmental health. Efficient land use management is critical for preparing for the dead in metropolitan settings, particularly in Nigerian cities. The accessibility, sufficiency and efficacy of management solutions for the deceased are crucial, particularly in Nigerian cities with various populations and land uses. This research focused on the long-term viability of urban management systems for the deceased and the facilities and services provided by cemeteries. The scarcity of amenities and services in cemeteries causes problems for urban management systems, such as adequate burying space, upkeep and surveillance. Inefficient methods of handling the demands of city dwellers near cemeteries in city planning should be handled to enhance citizens' quality of life and protect and enhance the urban area. Scientific research papers, journals, conference proceedings and theses were used to review the literature on urban management for the deceased. Critical concerns discussed include managing cities for the dead, rising demand for burying space, ecological methods and balancing the needs of the living with the dead. These strategies include reusing places, promoting cremation, creating green burial grounds, and developing inclusive ecosystems. It is self-evident that as cities grow, so will demand for burial space, prompting a move toward more sustainable and environmentally friendly techniques. Providing services and facilities for mourners can help ease their grieving and foster a sense of solidarity to balance the needs of the living and the dead. Cemeteries must be appropriately incorporated into the city's fabric.

**Keywords:** Cemetery Management; Effectiveness; Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Death is constant, and when appropriate land use management occurs, the dead and living can be managed within metropolitan environments. This is because death as a regular occurrence can jeopardise human health, psychological well-being and environmental well-being if not well and properly managed [1]. According to [2], the majority of fatalities in urban areas are caused by natural factors such as ageing, natural and artificial disasters and dangers, which include diseases, accidents, killings, armed assaults, etc. The accessibility, sufficiency and effectiveness of urban planning solutions for the deceased are critical, particularly in Nigerian urban areas, because diverse populations and land dominate metropolitan areas [3].

Furthermore, it is critical to meet the needs of potential visitors by providing facilities for grieving and remembering, as well as information about the dead and the burial place. Rapidly developing cities have severe environmental issues regarding urban management for the deceased [4]. Authors [5] demonstrated how weak urban governance allows people to bury the dead wherever they are on their property or in the neighbourhood. Cemeteries, whether inside or outside the home, can have an effect on the environment in the following ways: contamination of the soil, environmental deterioration, property value reduction, household accidents and waterborne diseases. As a result, infrastructure such as prayer rooms and purification stations should be accessible in public funerals to assist individuals in performing burial-related rituals [6]. Accord-

ing to [6], contemporary graveyards provide significantly better burial amenities than older cemeteries.

Cemeteries are usually constructed with extensive infrastructure, including compartments for washing and preparation before burial. Though most Nigerians prefer to prepare their dead at home, these facilities would allow funeral rites to be held in the cemetery. This would help the deceased, especially if no surviving relatives were left behind [7]. The author [7] demonstrates that graves are more than just a last burial site for the dead; they also serve as natural preserves, tranquil gardens and parks, and places of preservation for a wealth of archaeological, past and architectural artefacts. For each cemetery, a comprehensive management strategy should be developed, considering strategic factors such as choice, cost, countryside, biodiversity preservation, and capability maximisation [8].

Furthermore, it should be meticulously planned, consider evolving funeral habits, and accommodate varied cultural expectations. Cemeteries should be built with imagination, warmth, and sensitivity. Cemeteries may be utilised to store cultural artefacts, protect biodiversity, and encourage urban greening, which could lead to using headstones as landmarks. As a result, graves should be surrounded by classic fences and fortifications [9]. Urban management strategies for those who passed away may be perpetuated due to these imaginative concepts and features.

According to [9], choosing growth and shift patterns that are better to other plans in terms of society, the economy, and the environment is the goal of managing urban policies for deceased people for environmental sustainability. The author [10] highlighted that comprehending regional traditions and honouring and promoting indigenous cultural norms are required to ensure environmentally deceased management of cities. The author [11] maintained that the primary purpose of urban management is to promote a city's productivity, fairness and long-term viability by working with both private and public sectors to address the most critical concerns that urban citizens face. As a result, when developing sustainable and rewarding urban settings, we must address the requirements of the deceased [12]. Sustained urban management strategies for the cemetery are required to build successful municipal management strategies for the departed in Abuja, Nigeria.

Concept of Urban Management Strategies. According to [12], management entails organising, overseeing, encouraging, and organising, which are all part of the job. Urban management is a system that must be employed at the city's top for it to be recognised as an organisation and manage its business. Urban management should plan for the town, organise urban activities, oversee them, and inspire employees to do their best work. The urban management structure will compound the existing problems in the city, and there is even the possibility of impending doom if it does not provide strategies and answers tailored to the specific demands of the cities. Notwithstanding the reality that death has been unavoidable and will continue to be, preparation for the dead is seldom included in thorough plans [13]. According to [12], the feeling of duty in answering society's demands now and in the future is at the heart of urban management.

It is critical to ensure that urban planning methods for those who passed away are placed in the city to render it a more attractive and lively area since cities constantly strive to build and incorporate plans for living, working, making investments, and enjoying to attract residents and assets. For lifeless management practices to be effective, the goals and outputs of operations must be intimately tied to the city's long-term objectives [14]. Authors [14] submitted that it had been established that a lack of services and amenities in cemeteries is an obstacle to urban management systems for those who have passed away. This challenge has several components, including the need for adequate burial space, the maintenance of cemeteries, and assuring their safety and security. Furthermore, future visitors' requirements must be met by providing amenities for grieving, remembrance, and details about the deceased and burial site [15].

Plans should be developed with two purposes in mind: improving the quality of life for city people near cemeteries and conserving or improving the living standards of the urban environment. Enhancing access to essential utilities such as water and sanitation and improving transportation are two options for enhancing individuals' living conditions. Creating green infrastructure, increasing pedestrianism and public transit use, enforcing zoning limitations that favour mixed-use development, and improving public safety are just a few techniques employed to protect or enhance livability [16].

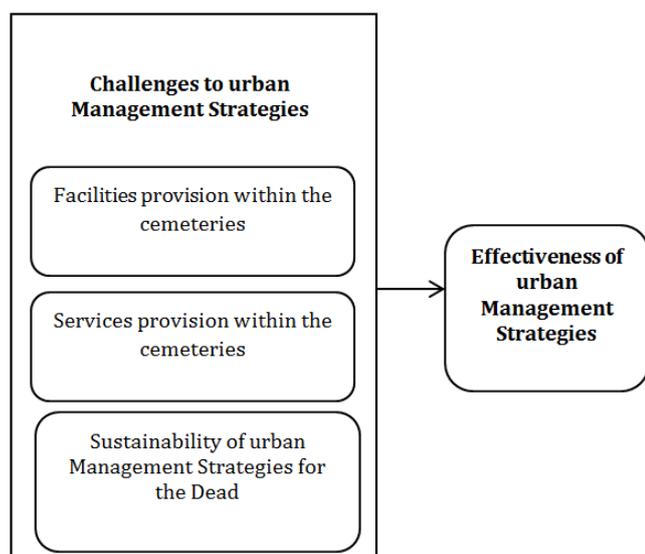


Figure 1 – Conceptual framework

According to the conceptual structure in Figure, obstacles regarding urban management approaches for the deceased based on facility provision within burial grounds, the delivery of services within cemeteries, and the sustainability of urban management strategies for the dead have a direct impact on the successful implementation of urban administration strategies for the dead in the research area.

*Perspective on Funeral Planning.* Regardless of religious or philosophical views, numerous cultures see burial as an extraordinarily polite and appropriate method to send the deceased and provide the family with a particular gravesite to visit [16]. The most significant issue with the standard funeral method is that it requires a lot of area, which is useless after it is utilised. Since burial grounds are distinct from other land uses by their respective positions, it is essential to understand this while preparing for the dead. Consequently, many assert that several laws regulating the planning and designing of their dead should be developed [17].

The author [18] identified five features or aspects of cemetery systems where fairness theory proves incredibly productive and illuminating. These are, in brief, management, ownership and administration, funding, social infrastructures, and environmental impact. Cemetery systems that are undermined by underdevelopment, corruption, and criminal conduct, where there is no clear accountability for the provision, considerate care is not guaranteed, and corpses are instantly damaged, are signs of a crumbling nation-

state. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everybody has a right to "a standard of life sufficient for himself and his family's happiness, including nourishment, clothing, housing, healthcare, and other required social services." In this light, proper waste disposal is a required social function.

According to [19], the administration and planning of the deceased ought to be directed by outlined cultural, religious, humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental standards. These important considerations include the selection of interment sites, the expense of disposal of the deceased, their closeness to commemoration sites, the abundance of free space for natural green areas and habitats, historical aspects, and diversity. Authors [20] also emphasised the importance of organising and handling arrangements for the departed to address longevity by ensuring that cemeteries are viable in every aspect of well-being. As a result, the following concepts were listed: Social refers to a social system's ability to function with a high degree of equilibrium and happiness; societal, which demonstrates social justice and safeguarding traditional beliefs; external factors which provide vast expanses of green the atmosphere; and economic, which includes improving the local economy and reaffirming the local skill base.

Because of land use and zoning regulations, government officials have much say over where new cemeteries should be built and how existing cemeteries can be enlarged. Nevertheless, the elements influencing the design and management of the dead are complex. Because cemeteries are artistic environments, they tremendously impact deeply held values and feelings. Most cemeteries in the United States are owned and operated by private companies. As organisations with a distinctly public function, cemeteries interact with various interest groups, including management, owners, undertakers, pastoral groups, urban planners, political leaders, owners, and the general public. Everybody is concerned about the location of new burial grounds, their design, and how extensions will be handled, making it tough for planners to tackle burial-related challenges [7].

Death can be described in a variety of African words. Some people view death as being beckoned or returning home, ceasing to breathe, bidding farewell, joining their dads, resting or sleeping, etc. According to [21], death, in addition to

reversing living men's links with other people in society, initiates a vicious assault on them. Planning for those who have passed away needs to be prioritised in Nigeria. The author [22] echoed this view when he stated that urban planners have forgotten about it, notably in most African countries.

According to [23], local governments in Nigeria are mandated by the 1999 constitution to provide public cemeteries. Authors [24] believe individuals should be able to choose between burial and cremation when dealing with the deceased. High funeral expenditures should not be used to punish the grieving. An inexpensive cemetery system is based on taxation and subsidy policies [18].

The allocation of place for burial is a service that requires precise calibrating to reach a cost-neutral arrangement, especially when a significant population needs to be served. Land close to urban centres and appropriate for burial tends to be costly; fragile decisions need to be made regarding the rate of grave reuse; and cemetery upkeep expenditures will grow as the ground is utilised since the scenery grows into an increasingly convoluted amalgam. Therefore, cemetery administrations frequently receive direct funding from state governments or municipal taxation. The ratio of public and private sector involvement strongly affects the subsidy amount. Management of cemeteries should keep and improve historic features while considering the surrounding environment's visible historical monuments and artefacts. For ease of access, burial facilities should be placed close to the population that needs them. The creation and usage of cemeteries should protect archaeological remains and come after their inquiry. Management of cemeteries should also preserve and enhance natural resources.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out with particular emphasis on existing and current conceptual and theoretical body of knowledge and published in addition to unpublished previous studies on urban management for the deceased. The study reviewed and analysed the literature on sustainability and cemetery management, with the sole purpose of ensuring environmentally conscious and environmentally friendly methods of disposing of the dead, which will, in turn, make the

grieving process easier and promote a sense of solidarity. Strike a balance between the needs of the surviving and the deceased, which has thus attracted much attention in recent years to researchers and research bodies, including corporate or government.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Issues and Realities of Cemeteries in Nigeria.* In earlier times, the custom of physically burying those who passed away among the living, either closest to or within their houses, was common among the approximately 450 ethnic groups which make up the present-day Nigerian population [25]. This act had overtones that were spiritual, devotional, and cultural. The belief was that even after they had physically died away, the departed were still assumed to be alive and ready to be associated with by their family members. The rite of home burial is predicated on these concepts. However, as a result of Western influence, the practice of burying the dead on the family property gave place to the public graveyards.

Authors [26] noted that the deceased's final resting place is not typically recognised as an essential issue in urban or landscape planning; how we handle the dead touches on various societal concerns that planners and managers frequently deal with. Many contemporary concerns and difficulties in managing graves have arisen due to the increased human population and advancements. The primary concerns confronting the Gwange cemetery in Maiduguri, Nigeria, are unrest and a lack of enough land [26]. Another major issue for the sector is the need for more land for the use of cemeteries. Cemeteries were constructed on unsuitable terrain, adding to a lack of space and increased need for underground burials. This is owing to ineffective or absent environmental laws governing the soil's suitability and the terrain's slope. The problems are aggravated by failure to comply with burial rules for grave depth in several city cemeteries, which are located near water fountains. The burial facilities sector operates on limited funds. The situation has deteriorated in most Nigerian towns due to the government's budget or commitment to the cemetery business, with cemeteries needing more critical facilities such as workplaces, water, fumigation equipment, houses of worship or meditation, gardening tools, and so on. According to [27], some graves are so situated near

residential areas that the potential for subsurface water contamination is highly significant.

*Religious belief and spatial planning.* Conflicts over mortality space, such as the place of a burial ceremony, burial ground, memorial, and any geographical activities associated with death, may occur between the sacred and the secular or various religions. Nigerian cemeteries are divided into three types: public (government-owned), privatised (religious and secular) and institution-based [28]. Authors [29] noted that confrontation between the spiritual and secular includes ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender. Nevertheless, we may also see it from the state's regulation of religious expression. When the requirement for a spiritual group for a burial ground is contrary to the spatial control established by the secular state, conflict may arise.

Additionally, dispute or contestation of a cemetery combining two distinct religions happens due to divergent comprehensions of what is sacred and profane or the prevailing religion's domination over an area. Various organisations own and manage cemeteries [19]. Mixed economics exists in nearly every nation, and the mix can be highly unique. For instance, the cemetery is still under the control of the state.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research makes an essential contribution to the topic of urban management. It presents a comprehensive analysis of the key concerns associated with urban management for the dead and some ideas for addressing these problems. In Nigeria, planning for the deceased has received insufficient attention. The author's [30] research supports that this is particularly prevalent in most developing countries. While creating reliable and fulfilling metropolitan places, urban planners must address the aspirations of the bereaved. For the sake of potential visitors, our cemeteries must provide essential services and conveniences such as collections, landscaping, and utilities. Sustainable urban management methods for graves are required to build effective urban management plans for the departed. The majority of scholarship on how the dead get disposed of has focused on two different

viewpoints: cultural and environmental. Even with the difficulty of sustainable urban management plans for the dead, the approach for controlling cemeteries must be adjusted to each city or town's demands. This nation's population has increased from 70 million in 1973 to nearly 200 million in recent years, living in various sectors involving dead planning policies. Government officials are typically mainly concerned with residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional land uses such as stadiums, schools and hospitals when allocating state land directly or through state agencies. Authors [15] noted that eath and burial issues can be handled from a general and an urban management standpoint. In general, when someone dies, their family owes them some responsibilities.

As urban areas become increasingly complicated, developing strategies that address the many layers of a city, from the street level to higher levels where policies are formulated, will be critical. Procedures should also address the many stakeholder groups, such as residents of metropolitan areas near cemetery grounds, organisations and businesses that conduct business in such regions, and government authorities.

As cities keep on expanding, so does the need for burial space. This is a challenge that urban planners and governments must confront. There is a rising trend toward environmentally conscious and environmentally friendly burial methods. It is critical to provide amenities and facilities for mourning. This can make the grieving process more accessible and can also foster a sense of camaraderie. It is essential to strike an equilibrium between the needs of the surviving and the deceased. This involves figuring out how to include a cemetery into the framework of the city while remaining courteous of both the living and the dead. Providing an inviting setting for the deceased's ultimate resting place, correctly burying the deceased's corpse, and ensuring that the final administration and maintenance of the prepared place of rest is reputable and sanitary are all ways to accomplish a sustainable design for the dead. The disposal of the dead is regarded as a critical and mandatory public good by municipalities.

## REFERENCES

1. Fernández, Ó., & González-González, M. (2020). The Dead with No Wake, Grieving with No Closure: Illness and Death in the Days of Coronavirus in Spain. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 61(1), 703–721. doi: [10.1007/s10943-020-01078-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01078-5)
2. Galvin, M., Michel, G., Saintelmond, H.-C., Lesorogol, C., Trani, J.-F., & Iannotti, L. (2023). Exploring the Impact of Crisis and Trauma on the Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being of University Students in Northern Haiti. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 25(2), 173–191. doi: [10.32604/ijmh.2023.018800](https://doi.org/10.32604/ijmh.2023.018800)
3. Yusuf, O. L., & Ojewale, O. R. (2023). Implications of urban violence on community security in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. *Urban Crime. An international Journal*, 4(1), 12–39.
4. Beebejaun, Y., McClymont, K., Maddrell, A., Mathijssen, B., & McNally, D. (2021). Death in the Peripheries: Planning for Minority Ethnic Groups beyond "the City." *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 0739456X2110432. doi: [10.1177/0739456x211043275](https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456x211043275)
5. Adedeji, L. L., Ibrahim, M. B., & Shittu, A. D. (2021). Assessment of Urban Mosque Facilities and Environmental Issues in Nigeria. *Journal of Religions & Peace Studies*, 5(1), 55–71.
6. Löki, V., Deák, B., Lukács, A. B., & Molnár V., A. (2019). Biodiversity potential of burial places – a review on the flora and fauna of cemeteries and churchyards. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 18, e00614. doi: [10.1016/j.gecco.2019.e00614](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2019.e00614)
7. Puzdrakiewicz, K. (2020). Cemeteries as (un)wanted heritage of previous communities. An example of changes in the management of cemeteries and their social perception in Gdańsk, Poland. *Landscape Online*, 86, 1–26. doi: [10.3097/lo.202086](https://doi.org/10.3097/lo.202086)
8. Sallay, Á., Tar, I. G., Mikházi, Z., Takács, K., Furlan, C., & Krippner, U. (2023). The Role of Urban Cemeteries in Ecosystem Services and Habitat Protection. *Plants*, 12(6), 1269. doi: [10.3390/plants12061269](https://doi.org/10.3390/plants12061269)
9. Xu, Q., Zheng, X., & Zheng, M. (2019). Do urban planning policies meet sustainable urbanisation goals? A scenario-based study in Beijing, China. *Science of The Total Environment*, 670, 498–507. doi: [10.1016/j.scitotenv.2019.03.128](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2019.03.128)
10. Badami, A. A. (2022). Management of the image of the city in urban planning: experimental methodologies in the colour plan of the Egadi Islands. *URBAN DESIGN International*. doi: [10.1057/s41289-022-00200-1](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-022-00200-1)
11. Stead, D. (2013). Key research themes on governance and sustainable urban mobility. *International Journal of Sustainable Transportation*, 10(1), 40–48. doi: [10.1080/15568318.2013.821008](https://doi.org/10.1080/15568318.2013.821008)
12. Mirzaei, R. (2023). *Investigation and position of urban management in small cities*. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369550848\\_Investigation\\_and\\_position\\_of\\_urban\\_management\\_in\\_small\\_cities](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369550848_Investigation_and_position_of_urban_management_in_small_cities)
13. Naziha, L., & Hassib, R. (2023). La fabricación de la ciudad entre la regulación urbana y el proyecto urbano, caso de la ciudad de Annaba. *ESTOA*, 12(23), 137–147. doi: [10.18537/est.v012.n023.a11](https://doi.org/10.18537/est.v012.n023.a11)
14. Boulton, C., Dedekorkut-Howes, A., & Byrne, J. (2018). Factors shaping urban greenspace provision: A systematic review of the literature. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 178, 82–101. doi: [10.1016/j.landurbplan.2018.05.029](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2018.05.029)
15. Swensen, G., & Skår, M. (2018). Urban cemeteries' potential as sites for cultural encounters. *Mortality*, 24(3), 333–356. doi: [10.1080/13576275.2018.1461818](https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2018.1461818)
16. Parkes, C. M., Laungani, P., & Young, W. (Eds.). (2015). *Death and bereavement across cultures*. N. d.: Routledge.

17. Abd Elrahman, A. S., & Asaad, M. (2021). Urban design & urban planning: A critical analysis to the theoretical relationship gap. *Ain Shams Engineering Journal*, 12(1), 1163–1173. doi: [10.1016/j.asej.2020.04.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asej.2020.04.020)
18. Rugg, J. (2020). Social justice and cemetery systems. *Death Studies*, 46(4), 861–874. doi: [10.1080/07481187.2020.1776791](https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1776791)
19. Basmajian, C., & Coutts, C. (2010). Planning for the Disposal of the Dead. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 76(3), 305–317. doi: [10.1080/01944361003791913](https://doi.org/10.1080/01944361003791913)
20. Enssle, F., & Kabisch, N. (2020). Urban green spaces for the social interaction, health and well-being of older people – An integrated view of urban ecosystem services and socio-environmental justice. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 109, 36–44. doi: [10.1016/j.envsci.2020.04.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2020.04.008)
21. Emmanuel, N. U., Paschal, I. I., & Onyinye, R. N. (2021). Modernity and burial rituals in Igbo land: A paranormal communication approach. *British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research*, 1(1), 28–38. doi: [10.52589/BJMCMR-OXV49EQI](https://doi.org/10.52589/BJMCMR-OXV49EQI)
22. Berrisford, S. (2011). Why It Is Difficult to Change Urban Planning Laws in African Countries. *Urban Forum*, 22(3), 209–228. doi: [10.1007/s12132-011-9121-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-011-9121-1)
23. Okorie, C. O., Ogba, F. N., Iwuala, H. O., Arua, C., Felix, N., & Nwosumba, V. C. (2022). Decentralisation of South Eastern Nigeria's Local Governments and Achievement of Mandates Enshrined in Nigeria's 1999 Constitution. *SAGE Open*, 12(2), 215824402210899. doi: [10.1177/21582440221089975](https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221089975)
24. Grabalov, P., & Nordh, H. (2021). The Future of Urban Cemeteries as Public Spaces: Insights from Oslo and Copenhagen. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 23(1), 81–98. doi: [10.1080/14649357.2021.1993973](https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2021.1993973)
25. Gumh, J. I. (2019). *A history of the development of yam economy in TIV land of central Nigeria, 1960-2000* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/322634288.pdf>
26. Daya, M. A., Modu, M. A., Butu, H. M., Shehu, B., & Kayode, S. J. (2022). Issues Confronting Management of Grange Cemetery in Maiduguri, Borno State-Nigeria. *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6(5), 121–128.
27. Idehen, O. (2020). A Comparative Investigation of Groundwater Contamination in Typical Dumpsites and Cemetery Using Ert and Physicochemical Analysis of Water in Benin Metropolis, Nigeria. *Journal of Geoscience and Environment Protection*, 08(01), 72–85. doi: [10.4236/gep.2020.81005](https://doi.org/10.4236/gep.2020.81005)
28. Pliberšek, L., & Vrban, D. (2018). *Cemetery as village tourism development site*. Retrieved from [https://www.fthm.uniri.hr/images/kongres/ruralni\\_turizam/4/znanstveni/Plibersek\\_Vrban.pdf](https://www.fthm.uniri.hr/images/kongres/ruralni_turizam/4/znanstveni/Plibersek_Vrban.pdf)
29. Ekaputri, A. S., & Sugiarto, B. (2021). Politics of Cemetery: Religious Minority in Local Indonesia. *POLITIKA*, 12(2), 208–221.
30. Adama, O. (2020). Abuja is not for the poor: Street vending and the politics of public space. *Geoforum*, 109, 14–23. doi: [10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.12.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.12.012)